# FORMATTING DATA FILES AND EXCEL SPREADSHEETS FOR CE PROGRAM

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE FORMATTING INSTRUCTIONS YOU ARE VIEWING ARE BEING DISPLAYED IN A NEW WINDOW (THE PAGE YOU WERE VIEWING PRIOR TO THIS ONE IS STILL OPEN IN THE BACKGROUND). WE HAVE PRESENTED INFORMATION ABOUT HOW TO FORMAT YOUR DATA FILES IN THIS MANNER SO THAT YOU CAN MINIMIZE THIS WINDOW TO MAKE IT AVAILABLE FOR REFERENCE WHILE YOU ARE FORMATTING YOUR CE DATA FILES.

SIMPLY CLICK THE MINIMIZE ( - ) BUTTON IN THE UPPER RIGHT HAND CORNER OF THE MENU OR TITLE BAR TO MINIMIZE THIS DOCUMENT WINDOW TO A BUTTON ON YOUR TASKBAR. YOU WILL THEN SEE THE PAGE WHERE YOU MAY BEGIN THE ONLINE FILING OF YOUR CE COURSE INFORMATION. IF YOU WISH TO CLOSE THIS WINDOW, CLICK THE CLOSE ( X ) BUTTON IN THE UPPER RIGHT HAND CORNER OF THE MENU OR TITLE BAR.

## Formatting Instructions

In order to successfully upload CE course completion reports to the Alabama Department of Insurance's CE System, the file <u>must</u> be in a "comma-delimited format". This means that all data elements on each line must be separated from each other by a comma. The file <u>must</u> also have a .txt (text) or .csv (comma-separated value) extension (for example, CEreport.txt or CEreport.csv). As you prepare your .txt or .csv file, the commas separating the data elements may not be visible if you view your data in a spreadsheet format. However, if you review your file in a text editor (such as Notepad), the commas will display as in the example below (Figure 8). Both of these file types can be created directly from a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

If your accounting software is other than Microsoft Excel (i.e., PeachTree, QuickBooks, Great Plains or Platinum), but will create a .csv or .txt file, that is acceptable. Another possibility is to "export" or "cut and paste" CE course data to Excel and use that to create a .csv or .txt file.

**Include only new records in your import file. Do not leave previously submitted course attendance in report. They will not be saved and will only make the import process longer.**

**Required fields and file formatting for uploading CE course completion data to the CE System:**

| Column Heading* | Field Size/Format** | Data entry required/optional |
|---|---|---|
| Producer Number*** | must be 7 characters | required entry |
| Producer First Name | up to 25 characters | required entry |
| Producer Middle Name | up to 25 characters | optional entry**** |
| Producer Last Name | up to 25 characters | required entry |
| CE Course Name | up to 100 characters | required entry |
| CE Course Number | up to 25 characters | required entry |
| Credit Hours | up to 3 characters | required entry |
| Course Active | up to 3 characters***** | required entry |
| Course Completion Date | MM/DD/YYYY | required entry |
| Provider Name | up to 100 characters | required entry |
| Provider Number | up to 25 characters | required entry |

\*      **Very important! Column Headings should take up the first row in the Excel spreadsheet. Your first record of policy information should be on the second row.**

**\*\***      **Very important!  Do not place any commas with in the data (ex. Jones, JR) as this will prevent your file from importing.**

**\*\*\***      **Producer's license number starting with A only, SSN is no longer acceptable. If attendee does not have an Alabama license number do not include them in your report.**

**\*\*\*\***      **Data entry for this field is optional.  However, if no data is to be entered into the field, then the respective column must be left blank in the spreadsheet in order to successfully import the data file.**

**\*\*\*\*\***      **Enter either format Yes No or in format Y N.**

*Hint:* If you must make any changes or corrections to the file, make them in the *original* document and then resave the file as .csv or .txt over the previous incorrect file.

**Examples** (when viewed in a text editor):

1. A123456,Derek,Steve,Wagley,Claim Investigation,3276,12,Y,3/19/2004,Center For Continuing Education,300004
2. A654321,Martha,,Burchell,Personal Auto Coverage,3278,12,Y,3/15/2004,Center For Continuing Education,300004  (example with optional field columns left blank)

**These following instructions show how to create:**
- a comma-separated file (.csv) using Microsoft Excel  *recommended method*
- a text file (.txt) with all fields separated by commas using Microsoft Excel
- a formatted column in Excel to accept all Text  (It is recommended that all number columns in your file be formatted as Text.)

**How to create a comma-separated file (.csv) using Microsoft Excel.**

Step 1.  Open or create the CE Report file using Excel.  See Figure 1 below.

Tip:  **Do not** format any columns with commas; **do** use text format.  **Do not** allow blank lines between records or after the last record.

**Figure 1.**

Step 2.

Open the menu item File-Save As.  Select CSV from the "Save As Type" list box.  See Figure 2 below.
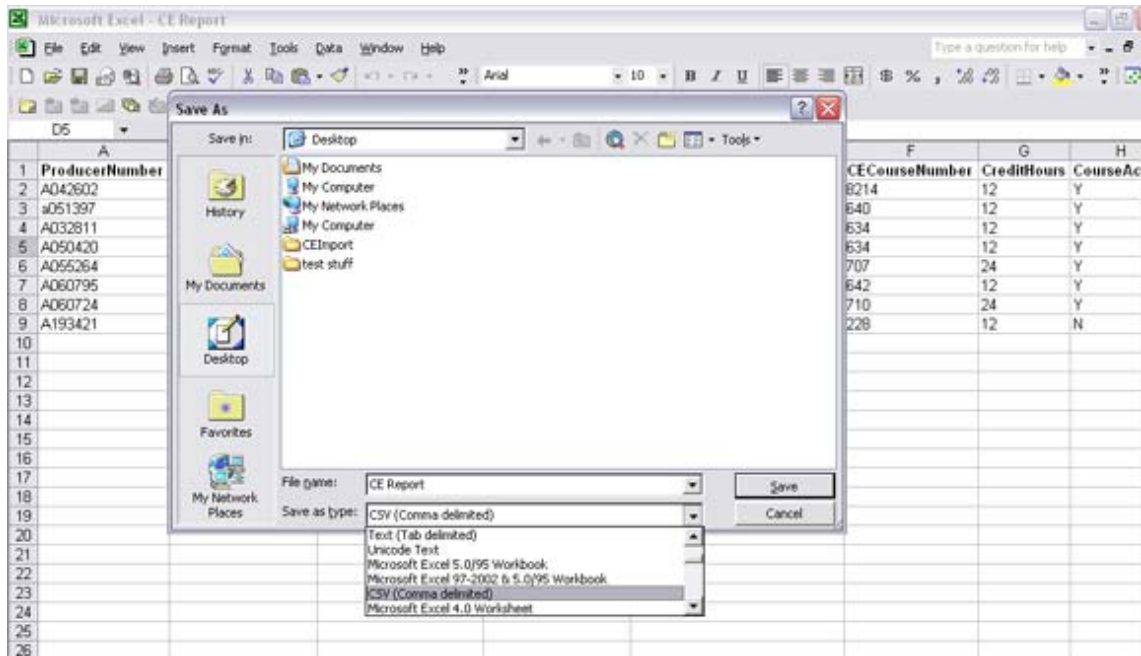


**Figure 2.**

Step 3.

After you click Save, Excel may prompt you with a message box stating "The selected File type does not support workbooks that contain multiple sheets.  To save only the active sheet, click OK."  This is what you want.  The program will upload only the sheet displayed.  Click OK.
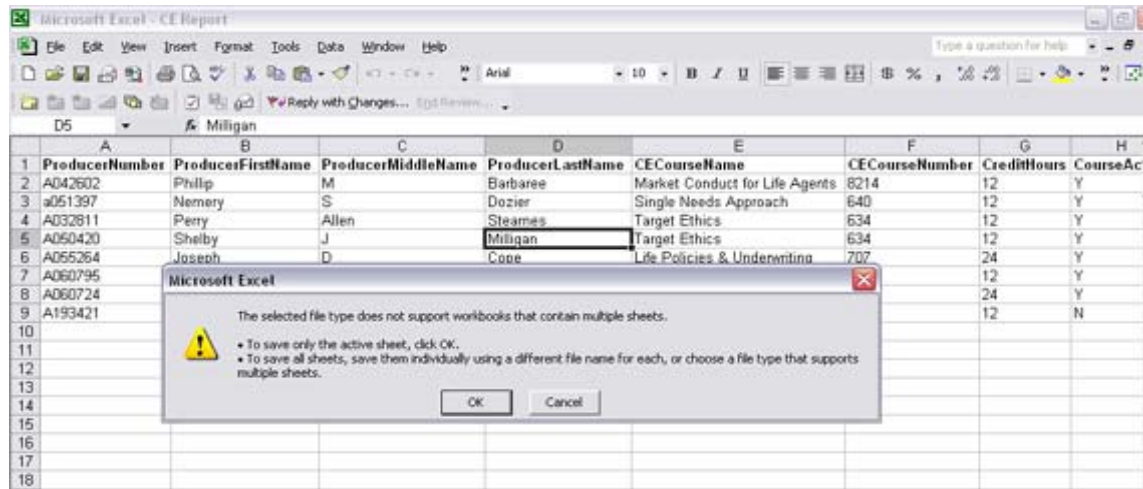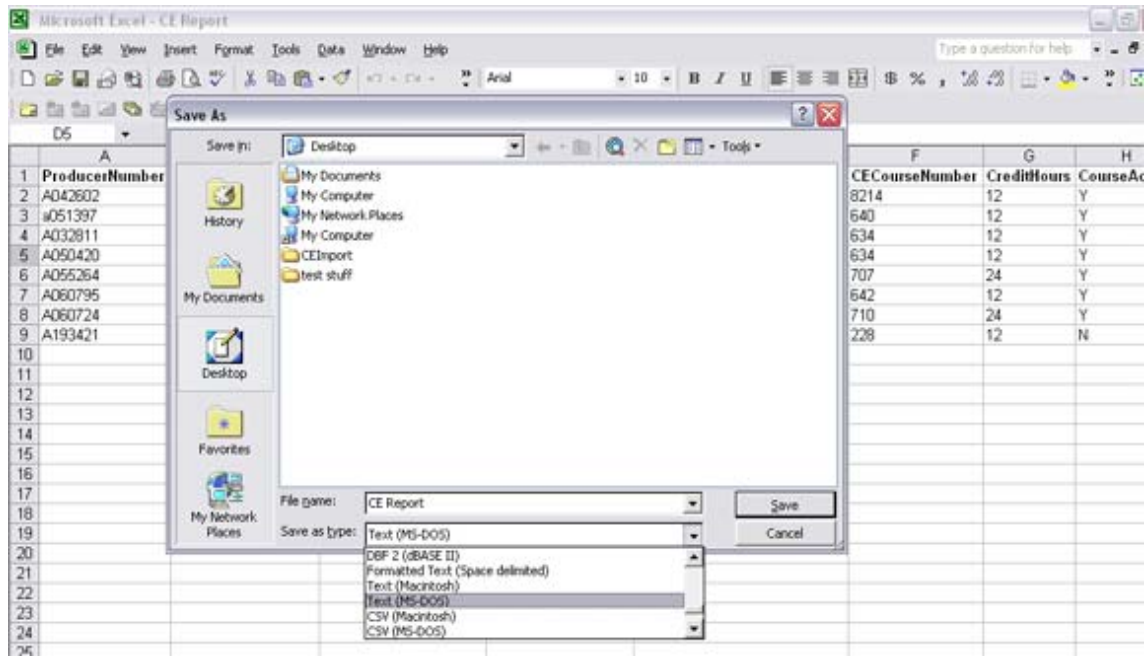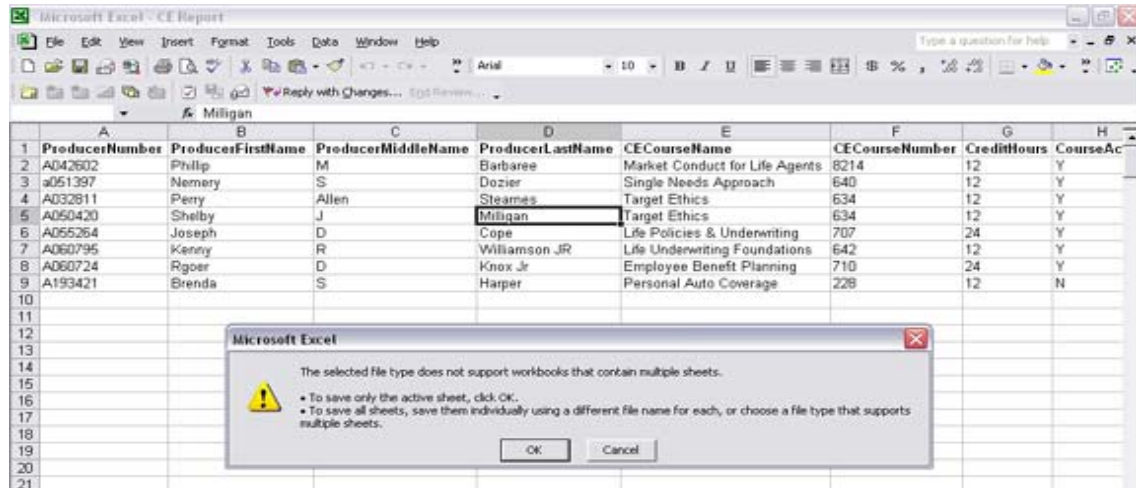


**Figure 3.**

The file should now be saved as a .csv file.  Your file is ready to be uploaded into the CE System.

**How to create a comma-separated file with a .txt extension using Microsoft Excel:**

Step 1.  Open or create the CE Report file using Excel.  See Figure 4 below.

Tip:  **Do not** format any columns with commas; **do** use text format.  **Do not** allow blank lines between records or after the last record.



**Figure 4.**

Step 2.

Open the menu item File-Save As.  Select Text from the "Save As Type" list box.  See Figure 5 below.



**Figure 5.**

Step 3.

After you click Save, Excel may prompt you with a message box stating "The selected File type does not support workbooks that contain multiple sheets. To save only the active sheet, click OK." This is what you want. The program will upload only the sheet displayed. Click OK.



**Figure 6.**

The CE Report file should now be saved as a .txt file.

Step 4.

Next, it is necessary to open the CEreport.txt file you just created. See Figure 7 below.

**Figure 7.**

Step 5.

Commas must be entered between each field EXCEPT after the last item on the line.  Be sure there are no blank lines after the last record.  See figure 8 below.  This must be done for every line in the file.

**Figure 8.**

Once you are finished, save and close the text file. Your file is now ready to be uploaded into CE System.

**How to format a column in Excel to accept, displays and retains data as text.**
*Hint:* **All number columns (ex. CE Course Number) in your file should be formatted as text.**

Step 1. Open or create the CE Report file using Excel. See Figure 9 below.



**Figure 9.**

Step 2.

Highlight the desired column by moving your mouse cursor over the header of the cell (E in this example).
Doing this will cause the cursor to change to a + sign, click your left mouse button once.  The whole
column should highlight.  See Figure 10 below.



**Figure 10.**

Step 3.

Open the menu item Format-Cells.  Select the Number tab.  Select "Text" from the Category list.  See Figure 11 below.  Click Ok.  Column E is now formatted for "Text."   It is recommended that all number columns be formatted in this manner.  It is also very important to note that the column does not have commas.
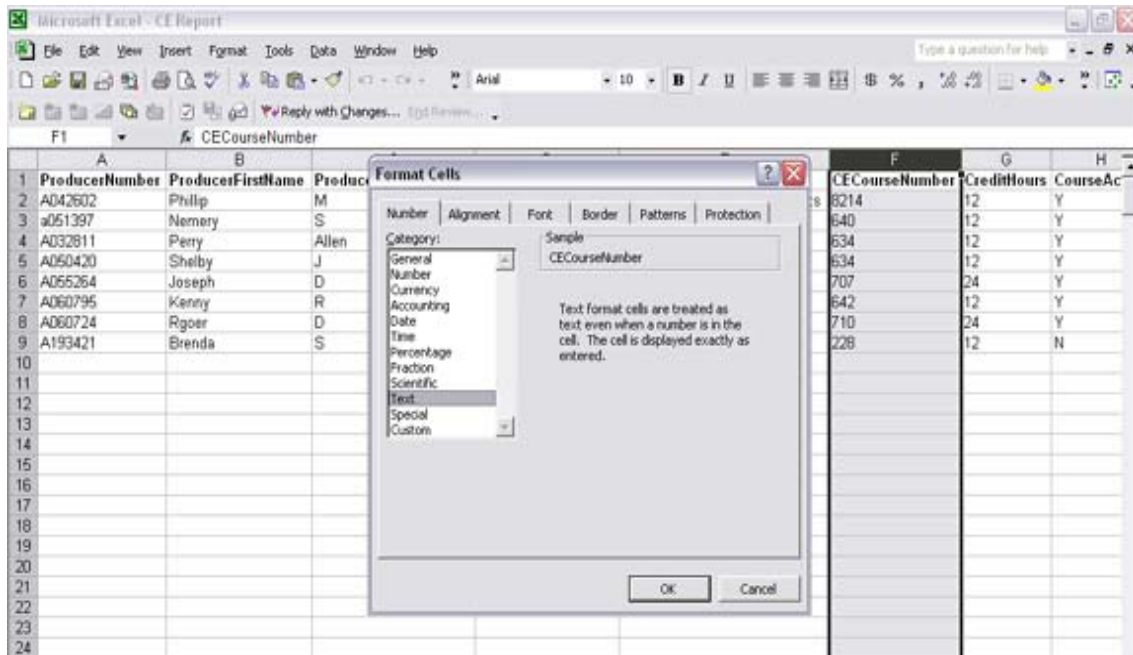


**Figure 11.**